

# ABOUT GROWTH

A Quarterly Publication About Growth Management

Fall 1997



**WASHINGTON STATE  
COMMUNITY, TRADE AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Building Foundations for the Future*



## Pendulum swings back to downtowns

By Allison Williams

Executive Director, Wenatchee Downtown Association

**W**enatchee is fortunate to have a strong core of business leaders looking out for the best interests of downtown. In the mid-80's they brought in a group of specialists who recommended that a four block stretch of Wenatchee Avenue (Wenatchee's Main Street) be converted to a more pedestrian friendly area. Wenatchee's \$1.8 million streetscape was completed in October of 1989, and it was a major milestone for downtown.



Wenatchee's Columbia Center, pictured here under construction, enhances the city's downtown by offering a convenient place where people can access regional and national transit and train service

In early 1992, our program became a partner in the Washington State Downtown Revitalization Program's tier system. Through a quarterly training process, staff and volunteers were brought up to speed about the Main Street™ approach. Since then, downtown Wenatchee has seen 75 new businesses start or relocate into downtown bringing 431 new jobs. There have been 94 private building projects resulting in \$6.1 million in private reinvestment. This means that through every local dollar spent (through our program), roughly \$17 has been privately invested in downtown. Our streetside vacancy rate is close to 6 percent, and our retail mix has upgraded

significantly. We are now tackling new projects, including the redevelopment of a 500,000 square-foot, turn-of-the-century warehouse district that is located between downtown and our riverfront.

At the same time, more than \$22 million has been spent on focused public investment on visible anchors for downtown. Projects include an expansion to our convention center and the addition of a performing arts center; the development of a multi-modal transportation center called Columbia Station; a new juvenile justice center, and our Art on the Av-



enues program (which enhances the overall character of the district).

Wenatchee's redevelopment process has not come without hurdles, and it has a long way to go. The public sector has had to come to the table to deal creatively with mixed-use development (which is what downtowns need to be) and with right-of-way issues, traffic issues, parking, and sometimes, just staying out of the way. This is not always an easy position for government, but in Wenatchee it works well.

So why should a community place so much focus on downtown? Downtowns are the gauge for our community vitality,

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## ABOUT GROWTH

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# Main Street faces changing landscape

**D**owntowns are the heart and soul of our communities. They are places where we can come together to share common experiences and see ourselves as part of a whole. Downtowns are much more than a collective shopping environment.

"There is a yearning in America today for a sense of community," says Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The physical characteristics of our cities and towns are a major influence in our ability to create that sense of community. This includes the way our buildings are designed and preserved, the nature of our streets and highways, public gathering places, and sprawl.

Downtowns have been negatively affected by tremendous changes in the retail industry over the past four decades. These woes can be directly attributed to changes in transportation and land-use patterns, and to commercial over building on an unprecedented scale. Most notable is the amount of commercial space in the United States which has more than quadrupled since 1960.

Yet, commercial buying power increased much less dramatically. The National Main Street Center notes that between 1980 and 1991, the amount of commercial space in the country soared at a rate of 40 percent, while retail sales rose less than 8 percent. New commercial space arrived in the form of both shopping centers and discount superstores. Unfortunately, sales and jobs simply migrated from downtown to development along the strip. Despite these trends, the hard work in 13 Washington Main Street™ communities is paying off.

Over the past six years, local Main Street™ staff, volunteers, citizens, and officials have worked with CTED to maximize success. These communities have shown increases in downtown reinvestment by the private sector, including: 1,147 acquisitions, expansions, and new businesses; 2,337 new jobs; 779

building rehabilitations; and \$133,451,929 in building rehabilitation and new construction. Public investment in downtowns has also increased.

Main Street™ program successes include:

- Port Townsend's Main Street program was instrumental in bringing back life to a greatly underutilized waterfront including renovation of Union Wharf and City Dock.
- Wenatchee's program is working with downtown property owners to renovate buildings and recruit businesses to underutilized warehouse space.
- Puyallup's downtown has a new streetscape. Puyallup Main Street Association helped pass a local improvement district for the project.
- The Downtown Walla Walla Foundation helped negotiate a location for the Army Corp of Engineers, bringing over 350 public employees to downtown.

For additional information, contact CTED's Downtown Revitalization Services, 360-586-8977.

## Pendulum swings back to downtowns

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

and by preserving what we have, we are conserving resources. By enhancing an asset that exists, we are maintaining the heritage of our community for years to come and saving the taxpayer the cost of investing in the infrastructure needed to support new development.

Downtown revitalization carries out the intent of the growth management legislation. And on a sentimental note, we are a generation of people who are longing for the sense of community and stewardship experienced in our grandparent's era. Downtown is the personality of your city, and it reflects your community's sense of pride and stewardship... all important values of our grandparents' era and today.



# Kent's downtown plan will carry out GMA goals

By Linda Phillips  
Planner, City of Kent

In 1996, the city of Kent received a CTED Planning and Environmental Review Fund grant. Sponsored jointly by the grant and city funds, the Downtown Kent Strategic Action Plan and Integrated Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is the product of a yearlong community planning effort.

Produced by an interdisciplinary consultant team headed by John Owen of MAKERS, an architecture and urban design firm, the action plan is currently under review by the Kent City Council Planning Committee. Its adoption is expected late this year.

As a designated urban center and the primary Kent Comprehensive Plan target area for household and employment growth, Kent's downtown is key to local and regional urban infill.

The presence of the Regional Transit Authority commuter rail station, scheduled to offer service by the end of 1999, will increase Kent's role as a hub for intermodal transportation. It also will provide a catalyst for household growth within walking distance of the rail station.

The recently completed King County Regional Justice Center has increased downtown employment by 617 employees. Construction of a county natural medicine clinic is currently underway, boosting local health care employment.

These changes are serving as catalysts for proactive planning consistent with the vision expressed during the action plan process. With its historic small-scale retail district, weekend public market, and community festivals, downtown Kent is the

heart of city identity and community spirit.

The community vision, though it has continually expanded and changed, retains the "hometown" principles expressed by the Kent City Council target issue statement and by citizens throughout the action plan process.

Participants described a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use center with retail, office, housing, recreation, entertainment, civic, and community festival activities. They envision a town square, small parks, greenery, and public art. They want to retain the existing small to medium building

ing design guidelines specific to each activity district.

The action plan identifies general locations for potential business and residential development identified by the plan's market analysis. It recommends protection of historic properties, additional analysis of potential housing sites, and identification of housing types consistent with the character of specific districts.

To enhance downtown identity, an enhancement system for downtown gateways and key intersections was developed. Environmental analysis was an integral part of the plan,

helping to identify and clarify mitigating measures so that they could be incorporated into the plan as actions.

The implementation goals of the action plan require comprehensive and constant citizen participation and a system to monitor environmental quality and growth factors. Some of these include available parking spaces, traffic volume,

and construction of housing units. An essential component of the action plan process is to determine the feasibility of adopting a planned action ordinance. After adoption of the recommended revised design guidelines and specific street standards, a planned action ordinance to integrate and simplify the development permit process will be considered by the city council.



scale and traditional close relationship between buildings and sidewalks — the small-town environment that retail developers are spending millions of dollars to recreate in other locations.

In order to direct growth in a manner consistent with the community vision, spur economic and residential growth, and maintain environmental quality, the action plan emphasizes: 1) improving multi-modal connections between activity districts in downtown Kent; 2) supporting existing and proposed public facilities, such as the public market and the proposed performing arts center; 3) improving parks and open space; and 4) develop-

**The illustration depicts Kent's Downtown Strategic Action Plan and Integrated EIS Streetscape**

*Concept by MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design*



# Olympia visualizing a new north downtown

By Kathy McCormick  
Senior Planner, City of Olympia

*"Picture the future," reads the poster. If only it were that easy.*

As part of Olympia's planning work in the north downtown area, photos were taken of sites the city and developers would like to see developed sooner rather than later.

Housing on this currently vacant lot in Olympia's north downtown would offer easy access to the waterfront and views of Budd Inlet.

The proximity to shops, restaurants, a grocery store, and the Capitol Campus make this an ideal spot for anyone wanting to live in the center of the city.

of the Port of Olympia, at the southern end of Puget Sound.

The north downtown study offered an opportunity for a vision, market, plan, and regulation reality check. What emerged was both good and bad news.

The subarea plan and EIS is expected to help the buyers, sellers, and developers of property in an area the community thinks is ripe for

CTED — and many other stakeholders shows the value of reality testing our plans and regulations. Major findings include:

## Get beyond traffic issues

Get behind travel demand management. It's not a downtown traffic problem. It's a regional traffic problem.



Structures that show the types of development the city is looking for were inserted, via a computer, to give a picture of the future. A poster was developed showing seven sites.

The poster project was part of Olympia's north downtown subarea plan and environmental impact statement work, funded by a CTED Planning and Environmental Review Fund Grant. The subarea is made up of a 60-block area north of Olympia's downtown, including part

redevelopment and infill. The PERF grant information: 1) answered as many questions as possible; 2) compiled new information to reduce the amount of information needed by developers for permitting; and 3) identified infrastructure, plan, and regulation issues whose resolution will create the kind of clarity needed for projects to even be considered.

The public/private process that included the "partners"—the city, the Port of Olympia, a developer, and

Even the least amount of development expected will keep major arterials through downtown full. Traffic modeling demonstrated that a regional TDM program will be essential to keeping the traffic moving in activity centers (including downtown) and will help cope with continued extreme traffic problems throughout the rest of the regional network. The form and density of activity centers, and good transportation options, will support the lowest household auto dependence possible



in our community — lower than can ever be expected from suburban development and much lower than the miles racked up by our very low-density but still rapidly developing rural areas.

### Be realistic about opportunities and constraints

Fine tune regulations. Resolve policy conflicts. Use available tools.

maximize the potential anytime soon. Untested markets, nervous bankers, unanswered questions about who will pay for what infrastructure, difficult or costly redevelopment sites, fees that don't recognize the comprehensive regional value of downtown development, and well-meaning regulations that run at cross purposes to the vision will continue to stymie development activity.

into place with newly legislated tax incentives for siting multifamily housing downtown.

Picture the future? Olympia is doing that and is taking steps to:

- identify and resolve the disconnect between its vision, plans, and reality.
- use every tool available to achieve land use, transportation, housing, and environmental goals.



The 12-unit, row-house development with retail space on the ground floor has individual garages accessible from the alley behind.

Work with others to identify and get other tools.

Olympia, like many other communities, has already made substantial public investment in downtown and believes that private investment in the housing, employment, and entertainment activities will follow. The north downtown plan and EIS process and information developed show that there are substantial opportunities. But it will take focused continued investment and fine-tuning of regulations to

### Maximize development downtown

Make the connection between urban form, density, transportation investment, and maximized transportation network use.

Olympia, in its downtown activity center, expects to go from 3 units/per acre to 6 units/acre over 20 years — barely enough to support any transit service, let alone the good service planned for the area. Achieving higher density goals will take strong incentives over time. Olympia is putting the first of these new tools

- identify additional action and tools needed to get the form, mix, and density vital to solving urban, rural, and environmental problems.
- demonstrate our ability to live together and create a dense, high quality, sustainable environment with room for the rich and poor, young and old.
- acknowledge that our activity centers — especially our downtown — will continue to define who we are as a community.



# Strong urban centers are important to vitality of Central Puget Sound Region

Concentrating growth in existing urban areas, and "centers" within these areas, is a primary strategy of the Growth Management Act and of VISION 2020, the growth management, economic, and transportation strategy in the central Puget Sound region.

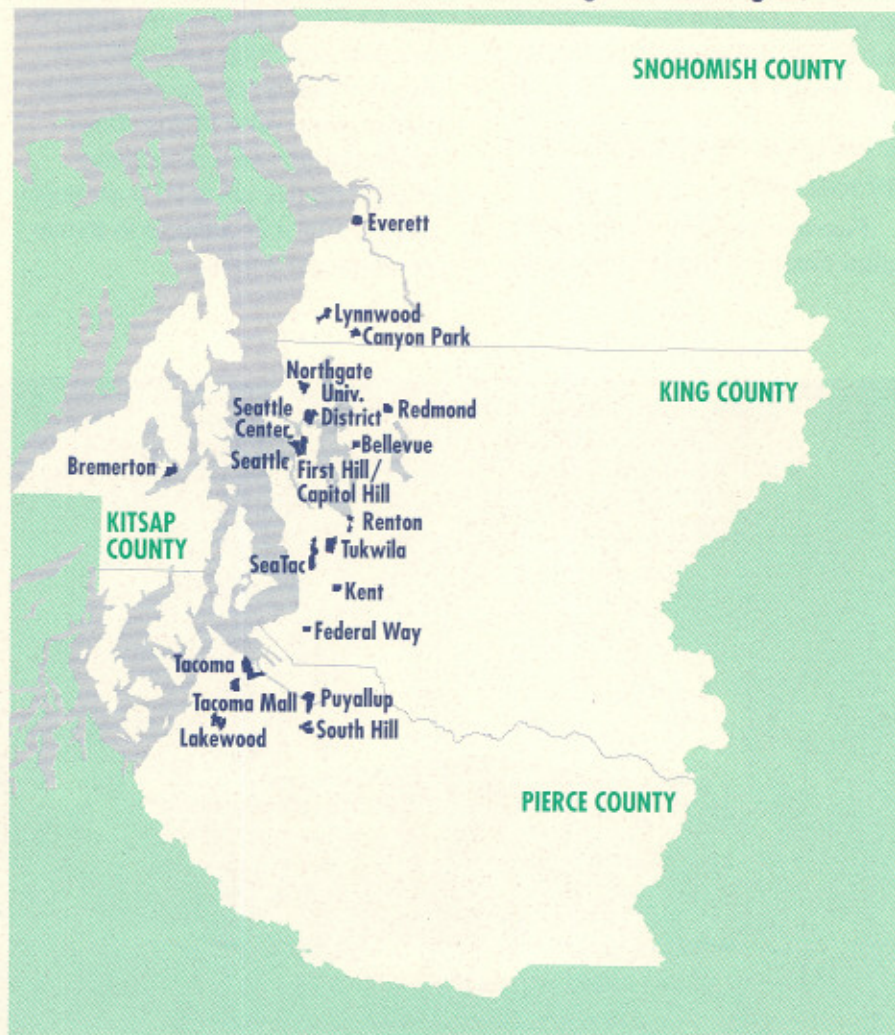
The idea is to most efficiently use public investments in infrastructure, preserve forests, farmlands and other critical resources, and create places that inspire a sense of community, neighborhood vitality, civic identity, and pride.

Twenty-one urban centers have been designated by the cities and counties in the region: three in Snohomish County, one in Kitsap County, 12 in King County, and five in Pierce County.

A Puget Sound Regional Council study of the region's urban centers produced 21 "baseline reports" describing each center's population and employment trends, land use, access and circulation, urban form, and planning status. These have been combined with comparisons and observations into a single summary report, *Urban Centers in the Central Puget Sound Region*.

The report contains a wide variety of data. For example, geographically, the centers are quite small, ranging in size from 200 to 1,350 acres and representing only 2 percent of the urban growth area. They currently are home to about 119,377 residents, 3.9 percent of the region's population, and have population densities averaging about 5,313 people per square mile, compared with about 2,463 people per square mile for the urban growth area. The centers also have approximately 428,190 jobs — more than 27 percent of the region's employment

**Designated Urban Centers in the Central Puget Sound Region, 1997**



— and could accommodate a 55 percent increase in jobs over the next 20 years.

Good access by a variety of modes of transportation is essential to making a centers' strategy work. The layout of an urban place — its street and sidewalk network, block configuration, and building placement — is perhaps the most crucial factor for pedestrian and transit access. The older, more established centers have small, walkable blocks that average three acres or less, while in the more auto-oriented suburban centers, blocks average from five to more than 60 acres.

While the urban centers are anticipated to take on a significant portion of the region's growth, 84 percent of the population and 66 percent of the employment growth are expected to occur elsewhere in the region. The distribution and form of growth outside the centers will, more than growth in the centers themselves, determine the region's success in meeting its growth management goals.

Copies of the report are available from the Regional Council Information Center at 206-464-7532.



### *Business district revitalization initiative*

The 1998 session of the Legislature may debate a bill considered this year that would enhance the redevelopment of traditional downtowns and neighborhood business districts.

House Bill 1782 attacked two major obstacles in local revitalization efforts: 1) the lack of capital for projects in declining business districts; and 2) the lack of operational dollars for local non-profit organizations to mount a successful revitalization effort.

The legislation took on the obstacles on four fronts:

- Provide a 10-year property tax exemption on improvements made to existing commercial buildings in a designated business district. The building would be assessed in the 11th year based on the improvements. The exemption could be claimed once every 15 years.
- Provide a business and occupation tax credit to businesses making a cash contribution to a local business district revitalization program or to the Washington Main Street Trust Fund. The B&O tax credit would be 75 percent of the cash contribution to the local program and 50 percent of the cash contribution to the Washington Main Street Trust Fund. The tax credit would be limited to \$250,000 a fiscal year.
- Share a percentage of state sales and use taxes, up to 1/2 of 1 percent on retail sales generated in the designated business district. Local government could levy the tax, a credit against the state sales tax, and local taxes would not increase. The funds would be earmarked for public improvements, management, maintenance, planning and promotion, and security in business districts, according to the district plan.
- Create the Washington Main Street Program from the existing state downtown revitalization program. The program would provide technical and financial assistance in specific business districts. Criteria would be created for the designation of areas for state financial assistance for the new tax incentives. An advisory committee and Washington Main Street Trust would be created.

## Bainbridge Island is creating a place where people can live, shop, and work

By Kathy Cook  
Planning Assistant,  
Bainbridge Island Planning Department

**W**inslow is the major area of urban concentration on Bainbridge Island, and it serves as the island's commercial, cultural, and commuter hub. The island's comprehensive plan recognizes this role and designates Winslow as the area to accommodate half of the island's growth to the year 2012. The plan also aims to strengthen the vitality of Winslow as a pedestrian-oriented place where people live, shop, and work.

The Winslow Master Plan Committee, assisted by staff and consultants, developed a draft Winslow Master Plan/Environmental Impact Statement based on the vision from the island's comprehensive plan. The committee also relied substantially on public participation to identify the following key issues:

- Establish a density level that would meet the growth targeted for Winslow, yet preserve existing character.
- Promote a variety of housing choices, including affordable housing.
- Strengthen the retail core.
- Enhance the character of neighborhoods and streets.
- Identify future open space/trails.
- Balance the roles of cars, pedestrians, and bikes for a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Improve transit.

The plan emphasizes that the location and intensity of new mixed-use development in the core area should be conducive to walking, biking, and transit and should be supported by the availability of public infrastructure.

One innovation of the plan is using the floor area ratio method to establish future density, rather than the standard "dwelling units per acre." A base FAR for commercial and residential development is established for each district in Winslow's core area.

FAR provides greater flexibility in the design and siting of development. And it allows the market to determine the number and size of units. The plan also established bonus provisions to allow additional levels of residential and/or commercial development in exchange for preserving farmland and sensitive areas, providing public amenities, providing affordable housing, and preserving historic structures.

Increased traffic from additional growth throughout the island, as well as ferry-related traffic, will have major impacts on Winslow. The plan describes strategies to offset this impact, including a bypass route to relieve Winslow of ferry-related traffic and a downtown transit loop as a transportation alternative. Traffic calming measures are proposed to control traffic speeds in the core.

The draft Winslow Master Plan/EIS was funded, in part, by a grant from CTED's Planning and Environmental Review Fund.

For information, call Kathy Cook, Bainbridge Island Planning Department, at 206-842-2552.





## GMA awards

Nineteen individuals, programs, and plans are being recognized for excellent growth management work by the League of Women Voters of Washington. The League announced the winners of its 1997 Growth Management Awards Program at a Seattle breakfast meeting recently. Nearly 90 nominations were received.

These awards offer an opportunity to pay attention to the positive activities that are happening in growth management throughout the state, said Snohomish County Executive Bob Drewel, who presented the awards. The winners are:

### Persons

Kirk Kirkland, Tahoma Audubon leader from Pierce County.

Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, legislative leader. Gordon Congdon Jr., of Chelan County, public education efforts in Chelan County.

Group: Land Use Study Commission and staff, public outreach and collaborative consensus process.

Special Award: Graham Tollefson, member and chair of the Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board, awarded posthumously.

### Programs

Public Participation

Western Washington: "Design Shoreline," a public participation program by the new city of Shoreline.

Eastern Washington: Spokane Horizons, the city of Spokane's two-year public involvement process.

Honorable Mention: Garfield County Public Participation Program, strong visualization and public involvement.

### Public Information

Western Washington: Tie between: Tacoma "News Tribune," well written editorials, and a "Bellingham Herald" six-page special section on growth management.

Eastern Washington: "Meeting in a Box," a Spokane County public outreach effort.

Honorable Mention: "City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village," an illustrated book for urban designers by David Sucher.

### Plans

Tie between: Bainbridge Island for its comprehensive plan and Olympia for its comprehensive plan and unified development code.

Special Implementation Award: Southwest Everett Subarea Plan, a subarea plan integrating SEPA and GMA.

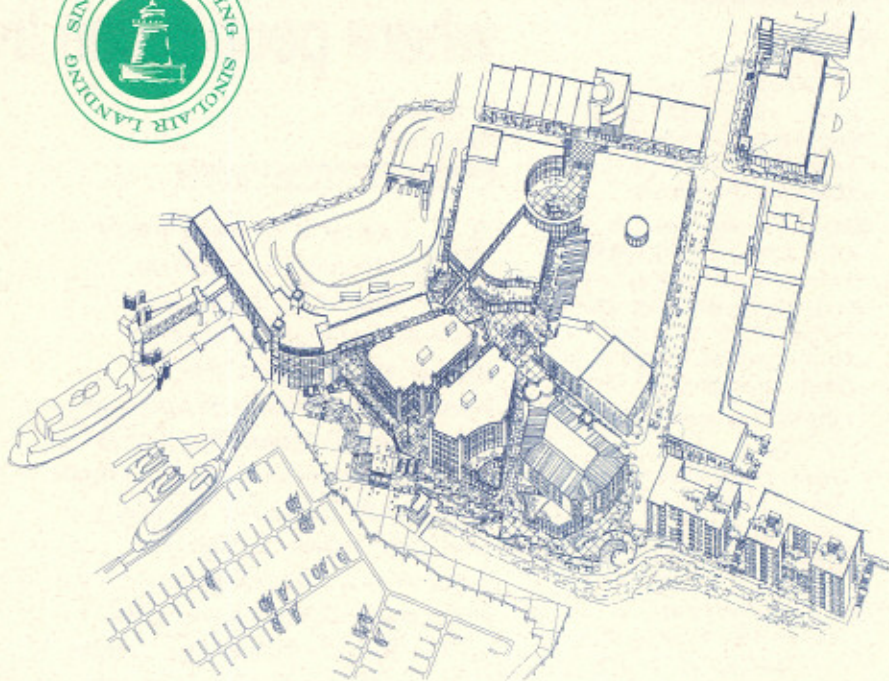
Special Interjurisdictional Cooperation Award: Interlocal Memorandum of Understanding on Zoning and Development, by Thurston County and the cities of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater.

### Projects

Tie Between: Malden Court Condominiums in Seattle, 10 high-density, affordable condo units, and Rivertrail Village in Redmond, 443 attached and detached family homes in the city center.



## Bremerton's Planned Downtown Waterfront



Sinclair Landing is a public/private project on Bremerton's downtown waterfront. The mixed-use urban redevelopment will break ground this year with the \$30 million Bremerton Transportation Center. The new center will provide a terminal for a "fast-foot" ferry and other ferries as well as a transportation hub for car, transit and bicycle travel in the region.

The public partners include Kitsap Transit, the city of Bremerton, the Port of Bremerton, Washington State Ferries, and Kitsap County, with state and federal contributions to the Transportation Center. The private partner is Commercial Group LLC.

The downtown project evolved directly from the city of Bremerton's comprehensive plan, and it will enhance the city's ability to become a transportation hub and metropolitan center as set out in the region's Vision 2020.

Private development of an art deco-style retail and entertainment center with cinema, museums, restaurants, marina expansion, and retail will open in the spring of 2000. Other private components include hotel, office, and residential development with public funding of underground parking.

For further information, contact Mary McClure, executive director, Sinclair Landing Association at 360-377-9460.



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